

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC370956
Inspection date	13/12/2011
Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	09/02/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care for a maximum of four children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The overall effectiveness of the provision is rated as good in all areas except for Leadership and management and quality of care which are outstanding.

Quality assurance systems within the organisation and the home are well-engrained. This results in regular and accurate reflection and identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Areas for improvement are quickly identified and implemented. Staff place a lot of emphasis on the expressed views of young people and these are also a driving force in making improvements to the home.

Staff also consult young people extensively about future plans. They make sure this information is reflected in placement plans and shared with social workers and parents. Young people have a comprehensive understanding of their plans and how best to achieve the identified outcome.

Relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive. Staff use praise and rewards to reinforce good behaviour and young people respond to this approach. As a result young people make good progress from their starting point at admission. The need for sanctions is now decreasing and physical restraint is a very occasional occurrence. Young people are consistently positive about the care they receive and say 'that staff really help us sort out our problems.'

Young people's needs are met in all areas of their development as is reflected by the comprehensive documentation that is held. While the health needs of young people are met, recording and storage arrangements for medication do not fully comply with regulations or best practice guidance. This matter was partially addressed during the inspection.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
28 (2001)	ensure that children's case records include details of the administration of any medicine to the child. (Regulation 28 (1))	28/01/2012

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

The close collaboration between staff and young people in placement planning helps young people reflect on their personal situation and identify problem areas they want to address. Young people have an excellent understanding of the reasons they are accommodated, and with support from staff, develop an emotional resilience for dealing with the issues they face.

Staff work proactively to identify suitable educational placements for young people. The short term nature of some recent placements have, however, presented some practical obstacles which have been difficult for the home to overcome, such as the failure of placing authorities to provide the information requested by the local education authority. Some young people have therefore encountered a delay in formal educational provision being made available. Staff compensate partially for this by making informal arrangements in the interim. As well as ensuring young people are constructively occupied, they provide stimulating and interesting learning opportunities, for example the planning of a trip to the space centre.

Similarly young people have access to an extensive range of activities within the local community. Expressed interests in hobbies and clubs are actively pursued and identified by staff. Through participation in activities, young people develop confidence and establish a social network in the area. Where permitted, staff help young people to have positive contact with their family and friends. Difficulties, when they arise, are normally resolved through the prompt intervention and mediation of staff.

Staff help young people develop practical skills and make a positive contribution to

the home by involving them in projects such as decorating, maintenance work and cooking. As a result, a trend of causing damage to the home has been reversed. Young people value their home and invest in the environment. Young people say 'staff look after us really well and want to make sure we have a really nice place to live. We really like being involved in all the work that is going on.'

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **outstanding**.

The continuing welfare of young people is central to the operation of the home. Relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive and are based on mutual respect. Staff consistently maintain a positive approach and most conflict situations are successfully resolved by negotiation. Physical restraint is rarely used and sanctions only used sparingly.

When young people are admitted to the home, staff spend a lot of time helping them to understand the routines and expectations. Young people say 'this is very helpful and helps them to settle in quickly.' Young people are well-informed about what they can do if unhappy about any aspect of their care, including how to make a complaint. Concerns raised by young people are investigated objectively, thoroughly and fairly. Where necessary, changes are made to policies, procedures and practice to prevent repetition.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people in their care and have a desire to help them achieve. The views of young people are given a high priority within all aspects of care and particularly within placement planning. Targets are mutually agreed and meaningful to young people. As a result young people engage and co-operate with their plans most of the time. Staff also adopt a highly inclusive approach when improvements are made to the home. Young people say they feel listened to by staff and that 'house meetings help us to make changes and get what we want for the home.'

Staff promote an ethos of learning informally as well as by encouraging young people to attend school. Information about different cultures and religions is displayed around the home to help young people develop an appreciation of the wider world.

While the health needs of young people are well met. Recording and storage arrangements for medication do not fully comply with regulations or best practice guidance. Action has been taken by the Registered Manager following verbal feedback to address this matter.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

The home's safeguarding practices are good and in some areas outstanding. Checks

completed on newly appointed staff are thorough and rigorous. The consistent application of these reduces the likelihood of unsuitable adults from having contact with children. Young people say that bullying is not currently an issue in the home and that they live alongside each other in relative harmony. The design of the building, together with a flexible and imaginative approach by staff, enables decisive action to be taken in response to difficulties that may arise should young people have different needs. A recognition of the difficulties that young people sometimes experience in their relationships with each other enables solutions to be identified and placements to be sustained within a safe environment.

Young people confirm feeling safe within the home environment and with staff. They say staff 'are fair and help us sort things out by talking to us.' Physical restraint is rarely used and only ever as a means of preventing injury or damage. Young people are protected as a result of the links that exist with the local safeguarding team. The home refers concerns promptly and agrees a course of action with the local authority designated officer (LADO).

The home provides and maintains a safe environment with risk assessments and checks on all equipment being regularly completed. All staff are familiar with the risks presented by the behaviour of young people. They work to reduce the level of risk and keep young people safe. While interventions to reduce the risk of absconding are currently successful, some young people have, since the last inspection, spent considerable periods of time missing from the home and at risk. Staff maintain contact with young people during their absence and work closely and successfully with social workers to secure a safe return. Staff welcome young people back to the home and persevere with their placement until a positive outcome, such as a move back to the family, is achieved.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **outstanding**.

Leadership and management within the home and this part of the organisation is extremely strong and effective. Evaluative and reflective practice is well-established. Monitoring processes objectively assess the performance of staff and outcomes for young people and then identify areas for improvement. These are quickly acted on. The Registered Manager and the staff team are highly committed and enthusiastic in their role. They have a thirst for continual improvement and prompt action is taken in response to requirements and recommendations made following regulatory inspections by Ofsted.

The staff team are extremely well-managed and supported. As well as benefitting from regular individual supervision of a high quality, staff mutually support each other and agree methods of working with children within team meetings. Each staff member is valued for the contribution that they make to the team and the smooth operation of the home. The staff team is well-established and very stable; there have

been no new members of staff appointed in over twelve months. Although the home does not quite have the recommended number of staff who hold a professional residential social work qualification, a programme of internal and external training compensates for this. Staff are skilled and competent in their role.

Comprehensive records are maintained for young people. These enable progress to be monitored. Staff routinely share information with young people and their social workers thereby limiting the potential for confusion.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.